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The Voice of Childhood

By

John De Fraine.

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THE VOICE OF CHILDHOOD;

OR,

THE INFLUENCE AND THE POETRY, THE WRONGS AND THE WANTS OF THE LITTLE ONES.

BY

JOHN DE FRAINE.

OBTAINABLE FROM THE AUTHOR AT HIS RESIDENCE,
WHITE HALL, WEST WICKHAM,
CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

MDCCCLXXVII.

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"Come to me, O ye children!
And whisper in my ear
What the birds and the winds are singing
In your sunny atmosphere.

For what are all our contrivings,
And the wisdom of our books,
When compared with your caresses,
And the gladness of your looks?

Ye are better than all the ballads
That ever were sung or said;
For ye are living poems,
And all the rest are dead."

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The Voice of Childhood.

EIGHTEEN hundred years ago the Saviour set a little child in the midst of his hearers, and told them to be like it if they wished to reach the Kingdom of Heaven.

Little children! innocent, pretty, loveable, artless, "prattling, up a'top of a proud mother's knee," the light of home, adorned with sweet charities, with simple wonder, with clinging love, with honest sympathies, with natural graces. Dear enchanters! knitting still closer the soul of father and mother, and binding them with the golden cords of affection; bright, living sunbeams, that cheer the lone widow's heart when the bread-winner has gone away for ever.

"God bless the little children,
We meet them everywhere;
We hear their voices round our hearth,
Their footsteps on our stair;
Their kindly hearts are swelling o'er
With mirthfulness and glee;
God bless the little children,
Wherever they may be.

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"We meet them in the lordly hall,
Their stately father's pride;
We meet them in the poor man's cot—
He hath no wealth beside;
Along the city's crowded street
They hurl the hoop or ball;
We find them 'neath the pauper's roof—
The saddest sight of all.

"For there they win no father's love,
No mother's tender care,
Their only friend the God above,
Who hears the orphan's prayer.
But, dressed in silk or draped in rags,
In childish grief or glee,
God bless the little children,
Wherever they may be."

THINK OF THEIR INFLUENCE!

Have you never known a little child reach up to the heart of the tallest man? Tennyson, in "Locksley Hall," makes "Baby fingers, waxen touches," stronger than a strong man's love. So a modern author tells us that, in the days of prophet and patriarch, heavenly messengers came down, and sometimes led men from the cities of destruction to the plains of safety. There are no angels to be seen now; but very often men are led from brooding thoughts of despair, and from the haunts of Death and destruction, to a land of light, and life, and liberty; and the hand that leads them is the hand of a little child.

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I don't wonder that the drunken man turned from the tavern door, and went home to live a better life because a little girl, with a sweet, childish voice, said, "Oh, sir, please don't go in; if I were you, sir, I wouldn't go in."

I read the other day that there was a boy who drew the likeness of a baby in a cradle years ago, and when he showed it to his mother, she kissed him, and called it passing fair; "and that" said the artist, in the day of his fame, when all England called him great, "*that* made me a painter."

Oh, ladies and gentlemen, it may seem a simple thing in these days of innumerable "isms" and "ologies," but, perhaps, it is good and noble work to guide and encourage a little child.

Smiles often make, a frown may mar. "Tell that child some simple story, or sing it some gentle song, or teach it some little prayer, and you go away and forget it on the morrow, but that little one has many thoughts, and you do not know what you have done, or what your prayer or story may grow to." Many years ago, before I had any dear little children of my own, a very young nephew was staying with me. We called him "Freddy." He was a very little boy, and he had heard me read a great many times, and knew that I was a lecturer, so at last, nothing would suit him but to learn an address, and getting on a chair, and putting out his childish hand, this was the speech he made:—"Ladies and gentlemen, I am a very little boy, but it says in the Bible, 'Let no man despise thy youth.' I haven't got much to say, but I think it's very wrong to hurt dumb animals, or tell stories. I hope I shall be a good boy—be very kind to my grand'pa—love my dear mother—never cheat at play—always say my prayers—and, because the land

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mourneth on account of drunkenness, I mean to drink cold water.

'So that is all I've got to say,
Until we meet another day.'"

Some persons think boys and girls don't understand, and they treat them with indifference and contempt; but I have seen boys and girls truthful, upright, refined, firm, who held to the right and scorned what was selfish and mean. If I don't want to make heroes of them, I say: all honour to such boys and girls. At a slave market once in one of the Southern States, a smart, active coloured boy was put up for sale. A gentleman who pitied his condition, not wishing him to have a cruel owner, went up to him and said: "If I buy you will you be honest?" The boy, with a look that baffled description, replied: "I will be honest whether you buy me or not."

Have you never heard of the boy who went to a public meeting once? Somebody near the door said: "What's the use of your coming, what are you good for?" The boy's reply was: "If you please I'm good to be made a man of."

"Beautiful the children's faces!
Spite of all that mars and sears;
To my inmost heart appealing;
Calling forth love's tenderest feeling;
Steeping all my soul with tears.

Eloquent the children's faces—
Poverty's lean look, which saith,
Save us! save us! woe surrounds us;
Little knowledge sore confounds us;
Life is but a lingering death.

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Give us light amid our darkness:
  Let us know the good from ill;
Hate us not for all our blindness;
Love us, lead us, show us kindness—
  You can make us what you will.

We are willing, we are ready;
  We would learn if you would teach;
We have hearts that yearn towards duty;
We have minds alive to beauty;
  Souls that any height can reach.

Raise us by your Christian knowledge;
  Consecrate to man our powers;
Let us take our proper station:
We, the rising generation,
  Let us stamp the age as ours.

We shall be what you will make us:—
  Make us wise, and make us good!
Make us strong for time of trial;
Teach us temperance, self-denial,
  Patience, kindness, fortitude!

Look into our childish faces;
  See ye not our willing hearts?
Only love us, only lead us;
Only let us know you need us;
  And we all will do our parts.

We are thousands—many thousands!
  Every day our ranks increase;
Let us march beneath your banner,
We the legion of true honour,
  Combating for love and peace.

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Train us! try us! days slide onward,
They can ne'er be ours again;
Save us, save; from our undoing!
Save from ignorance and ruin;
Make us worthy to be MEN.

Send us to our weeping mothers,
Angel-stamped in heart and brow!
We may be our father's teachers:
We may be the mightiest preachers,
In the day that dawneth now!

Such the children's mute appealing:
All my inmost soul was stirred;
And my heart was bowed with sadness,
When a cry, like summer's gladness,
Said, "The children's prayer is heard."

Yes, Mary Howitt is right. The children may all say at home:—

"We shall be what you will make us."

The world's greatest seminary is the fireside. For good or evil the child's heart is impressed there. Words of platform, and pulpit, and schoolhouse, may be forgotten; but even when long years shall have swept over us, the influence of home will cling to us still. Make the home pure, healthy, happy, refined, so shall those who live in it grow up, in some measure like it. I don't say this is a rule without an exception. I daresay there were cowards in Sparta, but because the Spartan mothers were brave, so also were the Spartan children. There is little hope of a sober nation, or a righteous people I fear, unless the good principles which are to exalt us, and the "godliness which is profitable unto all things" be

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taught by the fireside. Give us the children, and I shall have faith. I despair almost of some of those who are hardened and gnarled with long years of sin and depravity; but I believe in the little ones. Train the children! Their hearts are soft and plastic now—the springs of life are bubbling up in crystal freshness and beauty—the sapling is straight and tender. Train the children! and they shall go forth, with the charm of winning ways, and the power of goodness, to touch the wandering soul, and turn the hearts of some of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. Train the children! for by and bye they will go into thronged cities, and crowded marts; or they will emigrate to Canada, or Australia, or New Zealand, and there they will take the nobler messages, and be "living epistles, known and read of all men." Train the children! they are to be the fathers and masters and guardians of the next generation; they will plough the land, and sell the corn, and build the ships, and write the books, and guide the destinies of a universe. Train the children! then shall it be almost impossible for lost, and wretched, and perishing men to fling up wild arms in the mad vortex of passion, crying out as in despair "no man cared for my soul." Train the children! and the vices will be shrivelled up, the church strengthened, the cause of God uplifted; and those who have looked with sadness at the apathy and neglect of the past, shall shout with joy: "the little one has already become a thousand; and the small one has become a great nation."

And don't little children call up tender associations, and touching thoughts of the days of yore? When the shadows of life are lengthening, and your step grows less elastic, and you are drawing close to what Carlyle calls: "the awful confines of eternity," does the sight of a little child never

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bring back the gone years with their memories of joy and sorrow? Don't you think of the time when your cheek (its very wrinkled now) was round and ruddy, and your boyish feet were swift for fun, and your boyish heart was big to dare and do? Ah, you are wealthy now. You are reputed great on 'Change. You ride behind prancing steeds. You drink costly wines. You are the lord of broad acres; but, perhaps, there are times when you would give all you possess if you could only bring back the fresh, brave days of boyhood and youth.

And what does yonder poor mother think? She thinks of the little child who once nestled close to her heart, and filled her soul with gladness. She thinks of the gleeful prattle, and the wild laughter. She thinks of the strange beauty, and of the cruel death that came to snatch it out. She thinks of the little grave above which the daisies have been growing so long, and of the dear lamb that went home early to the "Good Shepherd." Ah, how many a happy mother with dear children at her feet has prayed in Bennett's words:—

"O, fairies, never leave us!
O, still breathe mortal breath!
O, not of one bereave us,
Thou fear whose name is Death!
These human blooms, O let them
Live on to summer here;
And not till winter fret them,
Bid them to disappear!
Lord, leave them to caress us,
Through good, through ill to come,
Still let these dear ones bless us
These fairies of our home."

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What a sweet and tender picture of child life Elihu Burritt gives in his walk from London to Land's End." He had been to a grand Fête at Twickenham and was walking to Kingston when he came upon a village Fair. "While yet in sight of the Fair grounds I overtook a couple of little boys who had spent the day on them. The smallest of the two was quite fagged out with the sports he had enjoyed. He was a little fellow scarcely three feet high, and walked in the dusty road with the hobbling step of a boy with bare feet over the stiff stubble of a new-mown meadow. As I came abreast, he turned up his small, round, red face at me, and dabbing his hand to his forehead, asked the time of day. So I walked with him all the way into Kingston, and he gave me the happiest description of the day's fun, suiting the action to the word and the word to the action, which is an improvement on Hamlet's advice, which children alone might have taught that unhappy philosopher. The animation with which he pictured the scenes at the Fair in childhood's Saxon, was charming. He had brought into the field three ha'pennies, which he had earned by honest little jobbings about home the previous week. He went with his programme all made up before-hand, and he had carried it out to the letter. He had spread the value of his three ha'pennies over the whole day in even bits of enjoyment. Two of them had gone for cakes and confectionery, the other for a donkey-ride; and that was "such fun!" From the Fair I led them off by a question or two into their every-day sports. The youngest was a little Izaak Walton in his way and he entered into his feats with the fish-hook with a vividness of description most interesting. As I bade them good night, I could not but think what charming volumes could be made out of the thoughts and talks of children taken by a short-hand writer

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in their own language. For a whole hour these little barefooted youngsters took me back into the happiest years of boyhood life. At an hour's distance from the brilliant Fête at Twickenham, they led me back through all the grave experiences of manhood, and seated me, fishing pole in hand, by a meadow brook bank in a New England village; and I was looking again with a boy's eyes and a boy's heart at the little speckled fishes sporting in the stream. What a dewless Sahara would be the walk of life without the companionship of children! What a dull and monotonous tune would be the best music of the world without the treble of children's voices! How slow and heavy the pulse of human happiness without the quick breathing hopes, and thoughts, and loves, and faiths, and fears of children!" Beautifully does Longfellow sing:—

"Come to me, O ye children!
For I hear you at your play,
And the questions that perplexed me
Have vanished quite away.

Ye open the eastern windows,
That look towards the sun,
Where thoughts are singing swallows
And the brooks of morning run.

In your hearts are the birds and the sunshine,
In your thoughts the brooklets flow,
But in mine is the wind of Autumn,
And the first fall of the snow.

Ah! what would the world be to us
If the children were no more?
We should dread the desert behind us
Worse than the dark before.

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What the leaves are to the forest,
  With light and air for food,
Ere their sweet and tender juices
  Have been hardened into wood,—

That to the world are children;
  Through them it feels the glow
Of a brighter and sunnier climate
  Than reaches the trunks below.

Come to me, O ye children!
  And whisper in my ear
What the birds and the winds are singing
  In your sunny atmosphere.

For what are all our contrivings,
  And the wisdom of our books,
When compared with your caresses,
  And the gladness of your looks?

Ye are better than all the ballads
  That ever were sung or said;
For ye are living poems,
  And all the rest are dead."

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The Poetry of Childhood.

YES, the "living poems" are the best; but still I am very thankful for the rich, sweet melody which little children have evoked from the dear singers who teach us "nobler loves and lighter cares." I know of nothing, in the whole range of song, more beautiful, more graceful, more full of soft airs and heavenly symphonies, than some of the Poetry of Childhood. It has often charmed and cheered me. It has often moved me to tears and the tenderest thoughts; and because I wish it to charm, and cheer, and move you, I bring some of it here; and now it shall speak for itself.

LITTLE ALICE.

SITTING by the cottage door,
With the face we love so well;
Sitting by the cottage door,
Little Alice of the dell.
Alice with the golden hair,
Little Alice passing fair,
What are life and care to thee,
Blue-eyed, sweet simplicity.

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Chilly silence brooding there,
Who is this so wond'rous fair!
Breathe no word, and softly tread,
Little Alice lieth dead.
Alice with the golden hair,
Little Alice pure and fair.
What are life and care to thee,
Crown'd with Immortality.

J. PAGE HOPPS.

"SEVEN TIMES ONE ARE SEVEN."

THERE'S no dew left on the daisies and clover,
There's no rain left in heaven;
I've said my "seven times" over and over,
Seven times one are seven.

I am old, so old I can write a letter;
My birthday lessons are done;
The Lambs play always, they know no better,
They are only one times one.

O Moon! in the night I have seen you sailing,
And shining so round and low;
You were bright! ah bright! but your light is failing,
You are nothing now but a bow;

You Moon have you done something wrong in heaven,
That God has hidden your face?
I hope if you have you will be forgiven,
And shine again in your place.

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O velvet Bee, you're a dusty fellow,
  You've powdered your legs with gold!
O brave Marsh-marybuds, rich and yellow,
  Give me your money to hold!

O Columbine, open your folded wrapper,
  Where two twin turtle doves dwell!
O Cuckoopoint, toll me the purple clapper
  That hangs in your clear green bell!

And show me your nest with the young ones in it!
  I will not steal them away;
I am old, you may trust me, linnet, linnet—
  I am seven times one to-day.

JEAN INGELOW.

GOOD NIGHT AND GOOD MORNING.

A FAIR little girl sat under a tree,
Sewing as long as her eyes could see:
Then smoothed her work, and folded it right,
And said, "Dear work! Good night, good night!"

Such a number of rooks came over her head,
Crying "Caw, Caw," on their way to bed:
She said, as she watched their curious flight,
"Little black things! Good night! good night!"

The horses neighed, the oxen lowed;
The sheep's "Bleat! bleat!" came over the road,
All seeming to say, with a quiet delight,
"Good little girl! Good night, good night?"

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She did not say to the sun "Good night!"
Though she saw him there, like a ball of light;
For she knew he had God's own time to keep
All over the world, and never could sleep.

The tall pink foxglove bowed his head;
The violets curtsied, and went to bed;
And good little Lucy tied up her hair,
And said, on her knees, her favourite prayer.

And while on her pillow she softly lay,
She knew nothing more till again it was day;
And all things said to the beautiful sun,
"Good morning, good morning, our work is begun."

LORD HOUGHTON.

THE LITTLE BLUE SHOES.

O THOSE little, those little blue shoes!
Those shoes that no little feet use!
O the price were high,
That those shoes would buy,
Those little blue unused shoes!

For they hold the small shape of feet
That no more their mother's eyes meet;
That by God's good will,
Years since, grew still,
And ceased from their totter so sweet!

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And O, since that baby slept
So hush'd! how the mother has kept
With a tearful pleasure,
That little dear treasure,
And o'er them thought and wept!

For they mind her for evermore,
Of a patter along the floor,
And blue eyes she sees
Look up from her knees,
With the look that in life they wore.

As they lie before her there,
There babbles from chair to chair
A little sweet face
That's a gleam in the place,
With its little gold curls of hair.

Then, O wonder not, that her heart
From all else would rather part
Than those tiny blue shoes,
That no little feet use,
And whose sight makes such fond tears start.

W. C. Bennett.

BABY MAY.

Cheeks as soft as July peaches,
Lips whose dewy scarlet teaches
Poppies paleness—round, large eyes,
Ever great with new surprise;

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Minutes filled with shadeless gladness,
Minutes just as brimm'd with sadness,
Happy smiles and wailing cries,
Crows, and laughs, and tearful eyes,
Lights and shadows swifter born
Than on wind-swept Autumn corn,
Ever some new tiny motion
Making every limb all motion,
Catching up of legs and arms,
Throwings back and small alarms.
Clutching fingers—straightening jerks
Twining feet whose each toe works,
Kickings up and straining risings,
Mother's ever new surprisings,
Hands all wants and looks all wonder,
At all things the heavens under,
Tiny scorns of smiled reprovings
That have more of love than lovings,
Mischiefs done with such a winning
Archness that we prize such sinning,
Breakings dire of plates and glasses,
Graspings small at all that passes,
Pullings off of all that's able
To be caught from tray or table.
Silences—small meditations
Deep as thoughts of cares for nations,
Breaking into wisest speeches
In a tongue that nothing teaches,
All the thoughts of whose possessing
Must be wooed to light by guessing,
Slumbers—such sweet angel-seemings
That we'd ever have such dreamings,

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Till from sleep we see thee breaking,
And we'd always have thee waking;
Wealth for which we know no measure,
Pleasure high above all pleasure;
Gladness brimming over gladness,
Joy in care, delight in sadness,
Loveliness beyond completeness,
Sweetness distancing all sweetness,
Beauty all that beauty may be—
That's May Bennett—that's my baby!

W. C. Bennett.

PHILIP MY KING.

"Who bears upon his baby-brow the round
And top of sovereignty."

Shakespeare.

Look at me with thy large brown eyes,
Philip my king.
Round whom the enshadowing purple lies
Of babyhood's royal dignities;
Lay on my cheek thy tiny hand,
With love's invisible sceptre laden;
I am thine Esther to command
Till thou shalt find a queen handmaiden,
Philip my king.

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O, the day when thou goest a wooing,
    Philip my king!
When those beautiful lips 'gin suing,
And, some gentle heart's bars undoing,
Thou dost enter, love crown'd, and there
Sittest love glorified. Rule kindly,
Tenderly, over thy kingdom fair,
For we that love, ah! we love so blindly,
    Philip my king.

Up from thy sweet mouth—up to thy brow,
    Philip my king,
The spirit that there lies sleeping now
May rise like a giant, and make men bow
As to one heaven-chosen amongst his peers:
My Saul, than thy brethren taller and fairer,
Let me behold thee in future years;
Yet thy head needeth a circlet rarer,
    Philip my king!

—A wreath not of gold, but palm. One day,
    Philip my king,
Thou, too, must tread as we trod, a way
Thorny, and cruel, and cold, and gray:
Rebels within thee, and foes without
Will snatch at thy crown. But march on, glorious
Martyr, yet monarch, till angels shout,
As thou sitt'st at the feet of God victorious,
    Philip the king!
    Philip the king!

"*The Author of* JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN."

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THE MOTHER AND CHILD.

Behold! a little baby boy,
A happy babe is he;
His face how bright,
His heart how light,
His throne his mother's knee.

Now in her face with laughing eye
I see him gaily peep,
And now at rest,
Upon her breast,
He gently sinks to sleep.

His lips are red, his teeth like pearls,
The rogue! he has but two;
His golden hair,
How soft and fair;
His eyes, how bright and blue!

His tiny hands are white and plump,
And waking or asleep,
Beneath his clothes,
His little toes
How cunningly they peep!

Oh! many things are beautiful;
The bird that sings and flies,—
The setting sun,
When day is done,—
The rainbow in the skies.

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My own pet lamb is innocent,
And full of play is he;
The violet
With dew-drops wet
Is sweet and fair to me.

But there is one more beautiful,
Gay, tender, sweet, and mild,
A baby boy
With heart of joy,
A loved and loving child.

MRS. WELLS.

THE CHILDREN.

WHEN the lessons and tasks are all ended,
And the school for the day is dismissed,
The little ones gather around me
To bid me good night and be kissed.
Oh! the little white arms that encircle
My neck in their tender embrace!
Oh! the smiles that are halos of heaven,
Shedding sunshine of love on my face!

And when they are gone I sit dreaming
Of my childhood, too lovely to last;
Of love that my heart will remember
While it wakes to the pulse of the past;
Ere the world and its wickedness made me
A partner of sorrow and sin;
When the glory of God was about me,
And the glory of gladness within.

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Oh! my heart grows as weak as a woman's,
  And the fount of my feelings will flow,
When I think of the paths steep and stony,
  Where the feet of the dear ones must go;
Of the mountains of sin hanging o'er them,
  Of the tempests of Fate, blowing wild—
Oh! there's nothing on earth half so holy
  As the innocent heart of a child!

They are idols of hearts and of households,
  They are angels of God in disguise;
His sunlight still sleeps in their tresses,
  His glory still gleams in their eyes.
Oh! those truants from home and from heaven
  They have made me more manly and mild,
And I know now how Jesus could liken
  The kingdom of God to a child.

I ask not a life for the dear one
  All radiant as others have done,
But that life may have just enough shadow
  To temper the glare of the sun;
I would pray God to guard them from evil,
  But my prayers would bound back to myself,
Ah! a seraph may pray for a sinner,
  But a sinner must pray for himself.

The twig is so easily bended,
  I have banished the rule and the rod;
I have taught them the goodness of knowledge,
  They have taught me the goodness of God.

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My heart is a dungeon of darkness,
  Where I shut them for breaking a rule,
My frown is sufficient correction,
  My love is the law of the school.

I shall leave the old house in the autumn,
  To traverse its threshold no more;
Ah! how I shall sigh for the dear ones
  That meet me each morn at the door.
I shall miss the "good nights" and the kisses,
  And the gush of their innocent glee,
The group on the green and the flowers
  That are brought every morning for me.

I shall miss them every morn and at even,
  Their song in the school and the street;
I shall miss the low hum of their voices
  And the tramp of their delicate feet.
When the lessons of life are all ended,
  And Death says "The school is dismissed!"
May the little ones gather around me
  To bid me "good night" and be kissed.

"THE VILLAGE SCHOOLMASTER."

A COMFORTER.

"WILL she come to me, little Effie,
  Will she come in my arms to rest,
And nestle her head on my shoulder,
  While the sun goes down in the west?

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"I and Effie will sit together,
All alone in this great arm-chair :—
Is it silly to mind it, darling,
When Life is so hard to bear?

"No one comforts me like my Effie,
Just I think that she does not try,—
Only looks with a wistful wonder,
Why grown people should ever cry.

"While her little soft arms close tighter
Round my neck in their clinging hold :—
Well, I must not cry on your hair, dear,
For my tears might tarnish the gold.

"I am tired of trying to read, dear;
It is worse to talk and seem gay:
There are some kinds of sorrow, Effie,
It is useless to thrust away.

"*Ah, advice may be wise, my darling,*
But one always knows it before,
And the reasoning down one's sorrow,
Seems to make one suffer the more.

"But my Effie won't reason, will she?
Or endeavour to understand;
Only holds up her mouth to kiss me,
As she strokes my face with her hand.

"*If you break your plaything yourself, dear,*
Don't you cry for it all the same;
I don't think it is such a comfort,
One has only one's self to blame.

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"*People say things cannot be helped, dear,*
But then that is the reason why;
For if things could be helped or altered,
One would never sit down to cry.

"*They say, too, that tears are quite useless*
To undo, amend, or restore,—
When I think how *useless, my Effie,*
Then my tears only fall the more.

"All to-day I struggled against it;
But that does not make sorrow cease;
And now, dear, it is such a comfort
To be able to cry in peace.

"Though wise people would call that folly,
And remonstrate with grave surprise;
We won't mind what they say, my Effie;
We never professed to be wise.

"But my comforter knows a lesson
Wiser, truer, than all the rest,—
That to help and to heal a sorrow,
Love and silence are always best.

"Well, who is my comforter, tell me?
Effie smiles, but she will not speak;
Or look up through the long curled lashes
That are shading her rosy cheek.

"Is she thinking of talking fishes,
The blue bird, or magical tree?
Perhaps I am thinking, my darling,
Of something that never can be.

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"You long—don't you, dear?—for the Genii,
Who were slaves of lamps and of rings;
And I—I am sometimes afraid, dear,—
I want as impossible things.

"But hark! there is Nurse calling Effie!
It is bedtime so run away;
And I must go back, or the others
Will be wondering why I stay.

"So good night to my darling Effie;
Keep happy, sweetheart, and grow wise;
There's one kiss for her golden tresses,
And two for her sleepy eyes."

ADELAIDE ANNE PROCTER.

TIRED MOTHERS.

A LITTLE elbow leans upon your knee,
Your tired knee that has so much to bear;
A child's dear eyes are looking lovingly
From underneath a thatch of tangled hair.
Perhaps you do not heed the velvet touch
Of warm, moist fingers, folding yours so tight;
You do not prize this blessing over much,
You almost are too tired to pray to-night.

But it is blessedness! a year ago
I did not see it as I do to-day—
We are so dull and thankless; and too slow
To catch the sunshine till it slips away.

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And now it seems surpassing strange to me
  That while I wore the badge of motherhood,
I did not kiss more oft and tenderly,
  The little child that brought me only good.

And if some night when you sit down to rest,
  You miss this elbow from your tired knee;
This restless, curling head from off your breast,
  This lisping tongue that chatters constantly;
If from your own the dimpled hands had slipped,
  And ne'er would nestle in your palm again;
If the white feet into their grave had tripped;
  I could not blame you for your heartache then.

I wonder so that mothers ever fret
  At little children clinging at their gown;
Or that the footprints when the days are wet,
  Are ever black enough to make them frown.
If I could find a little muddy boot,
  Or cap, or jacket, on my chamber floor;
If I could kiss a rosy restless foot,
  And hear it patter in my house once more;

If I could mend a broken cart to-day,
  To-morrow make a kite to reach the sky—
There is no woman in God's world could say
  She was more blessedly content than I.
But ah! the dainty pillow next my own
  Is never rumpled by a shining head;
My singing birdling from its nest is flown;
  The little boy I used to kiss is dead!

MRS. ALBERT SMITH.

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SKETCH OF A YOUNG LADY,

FIVE MONTHS OLD.

My pretty, budding, breathing flower,
  Methinks, if I to-morrow,
Could manage, just for half an hour,
  Sir Joshua's brush to borrow,
I might immortalize a few
  Of all the myriad graces
Which Time, while yet they all are new,
  With newer still replaces.

I'd paint, my child, your deep blue eyes,
  Their quick and earnest flashes;
I'd paint the fringe that round them lies,
  The fringe of long dark lashes;
I'd draw with most fastidious care
  One eyebrow, then the other,
And that fair forehead, broad and fair,
  The forehead of your mother.

I'd oft retouch the dimpled cheek
  Where health and sunshine dances;
And oft the pouting lips, where speak
  A thousand voiceless fancies;
And the soft neck would keep me long,
  The neck more smooth and snowy
Than ever yet in schoolboy's song
  Had Caroline or Chloe.

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Nor less on those twin rounded arms
  My new-found skill would linger,
Nor less upon the rosy charms
  Of every tiny finger;
Nor slight the small feet, little one,
  So prematurely clever
That, though they neither walk nor run
  I think they'd jump for ever

But then your odd enchanting ways!—
  What study e'er could catch them?
Your aimless gestures, endless plays—
  What canvass e'er could match them?
Your lively leaps of merriment,
  Your murmur of petition,
Your serious silence of content,
  Your laugh of recognition.

Here were a puzzling toil, indeed,
  For Arts most fine creations!—
Grow on, sweet baby, we will need,
  To note your transformations,
No picture of your form or face
  Your waking or your sleeping,
But that which Love shall daily take,
  And trust to memory's keeping.

Hereafter, when revolving years
  Have made you tall and twenty,
And brought you blended hopes and fears,
  And sighs and slaves in plenty,

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May those who watch our little saint
Among her tasks and duties,
Feel all her virtues hard to paint,
As now we do her beauties.

PRAED.

The Wrongs of Childhood.

IT is very pleasant to think of the influence and poetry of children; but very sad to think of their wrongs. O, brothers, let us have a heart to feel for these little ones. Do you wonder that so many of them go astray? I wonder that more do not. Human waifs, neglected and uncared for—cast upon the streets to beg, and pilfer, and steal—drinking in oaths and blashemy just as we breathe the common air of heaven—growing up without one childish way, or hour of merry glee—beaten, and kicked, and bruised, whilst other children are encompassed with "sweet affection," and lisp out "Our Father" at fond mothers' knees—made old and artful, and prematurely wicked—hiding away from the brutality of drunken parents, and sleeping in holes and corners where you would not let a dog lie. Oh! will you not feel for them?

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"Children small,
Spilt like blots about the city,
Quay, and street, and palace wall—
Take them up into your pity.

"Ragged children, with bare feet,
Whom the angels in white raiment
Know the names of, to repeat,
When they come on you for payment.

"In the alleys, in the squares,
Begging, lying, little rebels;
In the noisy thoroughfares,
Struggling on with piteous trebles.

"Patient children, think what pain,
Makes a young child patient—ponder,
Wronged too commonly to strain
After right, or wish or wonder.

"Wicked children with peaked chins,
And old foreheads! there are many,
With no pleasures, except sins,
Gambling with a stolen penny.

"Sickly children that whine low
To themselves, and not their mothers,
From mere habit—never so
Hoping help or care from others.

"Healthy children, with those blue
English eyes, fresh from their Maker,
Fierce and ravenous, staring through
At the brown loaves of the baker.

* * * *

"Can we smooth down the bright hair,
O my sisters, calm, unthrilled in
Our heart's pulses? Can we bear
The sweet look, of our own children.

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"While those others, lean and small,
Scurf and mildew of the city,
Spot our streets, convict us all
Till we take them into pity?

* * * *

"O my sisters! children small,
Blue-eyed,—wailing through the city—
Our own babes cry in them all;
Let us take them into pity.

Some time ago six poor boys were charged in a town in the North of England, with stealing a few potatoes. Five of the boys were ordered back; and only one was proceeded against. He was fifteen years of age, shoeless, and tattered; and was described in the local papers, as "little more substantial in appearance than a shadow." There was no wicked bravado in his face; but it looked melancholy, and had the care-worn aspect of older years. The presiding magistrate said: "Where is your father?—Prisoner: Dead.—Magistrate: Where is your mother?—Prisoner: Dead.—Magistrate: How old are you?—Prisoner: Fifteen.—Magistrate: Who do you live with?—Prisoner: No one.—Magistrate: What! do you live alone?—Prisoner: Yes.—Magistrate: Where do you lodge?—Prisoner: In Jonas Bond's brick kiln." The poor boy told his story with broken sobs, and it created "sensation" in court.

A few years since the newspapers recorded the death of a "Baby Suicide," driven to destroy the life she had hardly begun by inhuman ignorance. One of the London papers in an eloquent and indignant article wrote thus: "On Monday Mr. R. H. Walthew, deputy coroner, concluded at the Seven Stars Tavern, High Street, Bromley, the inquiry into the

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death of SARAH ANN BARKER, only eight years old, who was alleged to have committed suicide under very painful circumstances. Additional evidence having been adduced, the coroner, in summing up, said it was manifest the unfortunate deceased had taken her own life, in consequence of the cruel ill-treatment she had received from her parents. The jury, after some deliberation, returned the following special verdict: 'That 'the deceased, SARAH ANN BARKER, being an infant under the 'age of discretion, and not having discernment between good 'and evil, did cast herself into the river Lea, and so became 'suffocated; and the said jury do further say that the said 'SARAH ANN BARKER, was induced so to take her own life, 'from the fear of punishment by her parents, for breaking 'a basin, they having been in the habit of cruelly beating 'her, and they consider the conduct of such parents inhuman 'and unnatural.'" Imagine the scene and the actor! Think how stern must be the circumstances, and how dark the prospect, which can induce even a grown man or woman to face the suicide's leap! Transfer the accumulated anguish and dread which break their stronger heart, and make Death himself seem desirable, to this baby bosom—this poor, panting, terrified, hapless breast. Conceive, if we can conceive it, how bitter must have been the grief, how helpless the despair, how cold, and gloomy, and pitiless, the aspect of that new world where she had begun to live, to give this baby the desperate courage thus to leave it. She ought to have been on the river's bank for some play-time errand, or glancing at her own round face, and dangling child-tresses in its ripple. Instead of that, she was standing by its brink with death in her dreams and desires—starved of love—starved of hope—starved of everything tender and pleasant upon which childhood feeds. The wretched broken potsherd stood between

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her and the home which had been made a hell to her; nowhere else to go in the wide world, and there only blows, and curses, and anger intolerable! So, with her eight years' knowledge of life, this poor spirit was weary and sick of it. The cold wintry water had far less terror for her than her father's voice, or her mother's face, and she leaped in. "And so became suffocated," does the jury's verdict say? It must have meant some word more terrible, for never was tender being thrust harshlier out of life than this tiny, cowed, shivering suicide.

"Let those fathers think of it who see their strength and their courage reflected in their children, and are grateful to God for his gift of love. Let those mothers think of it who tend their darlings in couches of silk and down, and would not suffer the airs of heaven to ruffle too rudely the golden locks of the sleepers. Let them be aware that the world is not yet so well ordered, nor Christianity so Christian, but that there is a father in this city, and a mother, in whose ears that shrill scream is sounding—the cry of the child-suicide—as she leapt from the cruelty of home to the mercy of God.

"Fortunately, we do not meet many such cases; but the shameful practice at the bottom of this is so far from uncommon that it is the mere culmination of a thousand child-miseries. Let the little martyr's voice be heard in those homes, however poor, where her fellows in infancy and innocence are now suffering. Children are not sent to be beaten and cursed into shape. No dutiful youth, or affectionate manhood and womanhood can come out of that dreadful doctrine that blows and stripes are the best education for the young. It is a grammar of fiends, a horn-book of devils, a primer, not of brutes, because brutes are gentle with their

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offspring. Is not the love of children worth earning? Will they not serve better, learn better, work better, and live better, when the precious smile and coveted kind word reward the obedience? Whence, then, this deadly theory, that they must be coerced into duty, and flogged into good behaviour. Shall we not some day see a time dawning when childhood shall pass in all its natural pleasures, and the authority of home be moulded on that which is its archetype, the love of God the Father? We do not write for the senseless, guilty creatures whose child this poor baby was, and upon whose dull souls the sin and shame of her early death remain. Them we leave to their own bitter repentance, and to the reproaches of all who hear their names. But it is necessary to speak out against the rites of the modern Moloch—the child sacrifices of the nineteenth century—when a little life is frighted from earth for the value of twopence; when for the sake of a cracked basin, the "golden bowl" has been shattered."

I speak often about the sin of drunkenness, how it enslaves the soul, and breaks poor women's hearts; but I think one of the saddest things about it is, the *wrong* it inflicts upon little children. See how it hardens natural affection, till the man who ought to be their protector becomes their oppressor. God pity the drunkard's children! I have seen them given over to ignorance and evil companionship—I have seen them in rags and tatters—I have seen them exposed to cruel taunts and wicked ridicule—I have seen them creep upstairs, to watch with childish horror their dearest relative battling with imaginary demons, fighting with fancied ghosts, talking in a madman's incoherent strains—I have seen them grow up vicious and criminal because the home was full of wretchedness, the night hideous with quarrels, and the day dreary

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with despair—I have seen their white faces pinched with want, and their thin fingers held out appealingly, but in vain, for food.

God pity these children of the drunkard! You laugh at us sometimes. You call us bigot and enthusiast, because we fight against a sin which steals the little child's bread—which furrows the poor mother's cheek—which crushes the wife's soul with care—which robs the home of peace—which fills the land with crime and misery; but if anything should stir us up to work against this unspeakable curse of our country, I think it is the great army of ill-used children, and patient broken-hearted women—forgiving even unto seventy-times seven; whose voices, choked with sobs, and wailing, and lamentation, bid us come up "to the help of the weak against the strong—to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

Oh, to raise them up, and teach them, and lead them! Blessed be the man or woman, whether it be poor John Pounds the cobbler, or my Lady Clara Vere de Vere, who teaches the "orphan boy to read," and "the orphan girl to sew." Blessed be the man or woman who wipes away their childish tears, and soothes their unnatural cares, and folds them in with the gentle arms of love and pity. Blessed be the man or woman who makes straight the rough and crooked paths of life for their tender feet, and who guides their young souls to the great All-Father.

"Who bids for the little children,
Body and soul, and brain?
Who bids for the little children,
Young, and without a stain?

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Will no one bid," said England,
"For their souls so new and white,
And fit for all good or evil,
The world on their page may write?"

"We bid," said Pest and Famine,
"We bid for life and limb;
Fever, and pain, and squalor,
Their bright young eyes shall dim.
When the children grow too many,
We'll nurse them as our own,
And hide them in secret places,
Where none may hear their moan."

"I bid," said Beggary, howling,
"I bid for them, one and all!
I'll teach them a thousand lessons—
To lie, to sulk, to crawl!"

"And I'll bid higher and higher,"
Said Crime, with a wolfish grin;
"For I love to lead the children
Through the flowery paths of sin.
They shall swarm in the streets to pilfer,
They shall plague the broad highway,
Till they grow too old for pity,
And ripe for the law to slay.

"Prison, and hulk, and gallows,
Are many in the land;
'Twere folly not to use them,
So proudly as they stand.
Give me the little children,
I'll take them as they're born,
And feed their evil passions
With misery and scorn.

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"Give me the little children,
Ye good, ye rich, ye wise,
And let the busy world spin round;
While ye shut your idle eyes:
And your judges shall have work,
And your lawyers wag the tongue,
And the goalers and the policemen
Shall be fathers to the young.

"I, and the law, for pastime,
Shall struggle day and night;
And the law shall gain, but I shall win
And we'll still renew the fight;
And ever and aye we'll wrestle,
Till law grow sick and sad,
And, kill, in its desperation,
The incorrigibly bad.

"I, and the law, and Justice,
Shall thwart each other still:
And hearts shall break to see it,
And innocent blood shall spill!
So leave—oh, leave the children
To ignorance and woe—
And I'll come in and teach them
The way that they shall go."

"Oh, shame!" said True Religion,
"That ever this should be!
I'll take the little children—
I'll take them all to me;
I'll raise them up with kindness
From the mire in which they've trod,
I'll teach them words of blessing,
I'll lead them up to God."

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The Wants of Childhood.

O Brothers, despise not the voice of Childhood. Listen to the cry of the little ones. What says the voice? The voice says:

LOVE US.

Just as the flower reveals its wonders, and opens up its world of beauty when the warm sunbeams begin to woo it, so does the heart of a little child to those who love it. And when you love it, is there anything in all the world so confiding, so trusting, so lovesome, as a little child? Have you never felt holier and better because of the blue eyes with their depths of innocence, or the little arms that folded so warmly and clingingly about your neck? When you have been heartsore and world weary, when you have been sick of man's sordidness, when you have been cast down by trouble, when you have seen the faithlessness of friends, and have longed to run away to the wilderness to free yourself from scorn, did you not sometimes get right again if you talked with a little child? Yes, the voice says "love us." For prattling youth or hoary age, what is life without love? To any of us, what are these common days unless above all the turmoil, and all the struggle, and all the tempest, the losses

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and shattered hopes, the tears and sad farewells, we can see the face of heaven and the light of love. This lessens labour. It makes it an easy burden. Yonder mother, poor and widowed, and destitute, toils wearily enough from day to day, but at night she goes home to her little ones, and her love illumines that rude cottage with a glory such as palaces often know not. You go out every morning to hard work, and perhaps, the wage is meagre enough, but you don't care if you can only comfort that crippled sister, or befriend that orphan child, or support that sick wife.

See how love lightens the burden. Nay, it not only lightens burdens, but it gives joy—filling the night with gladness, and the day with unspeakable melody. Oh, I think it is love the age wants. More love in the home; love to one another; love to God. We all do better for it. We may work from a sense of duty, but the noblest prompter is love. Cherish it. Give it to little children. All their faculties will expand in its sweet atmosphere. Their hearts will come out to meet you. It is so easy to make them happy, A word, a smile, a fond look. These things are very simple, but they may win a world of affection; and perhaps they will not be forgotten by Him who noteth the sparrows fall, and who has promised a reward to those who give only a cup of cold water in His own blessed and hallowed name.

The voice says:

BEAR WITH US.

No doubt it is very difficult sometimes, especially with boys. Very often they are adepts at mischief, and are early addicted to whistling and screeching. They have a great habit of meddling, and are very fond of asking questions. And yet I have heard of fathers and mothers who have lost boys, and would

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give all the world if they could only get them back again. They wouldn't mind seeing things under their feet, bits of paper, kites, hoops, tops, go-carts, and such like trumpery. They wouldn't mind a few crumbs on the carpet, or a little paste spilt on the kitchen table. They wouldn't mind the patter of little feet, and hearty shouts. They wouldn't mind being asked for a bit of string, or an old newspaper, or a penny to buy nuts with. I do confess, I am one of those who don't wish to see boys get rid of boyish ways. Rudeness or vulgarity should be punished, but as for boisterousness, that will soon cool down. Every dog has its day. Let the boys have theirs. Care, and money-getting, and a wrinkled face will come soon enough. All their boyish days and boyish ways will pass away very quickly. Let the sun shine when it will.

The voice says:

TEACH US!

To battle with ignorance, and to throw into the mind some gleam of knowledge and virtue, is work of which a man might almost be proud. All the life is to be made or marred when we are young. How important that the TEACHER should be wise, and liberal, and loving, and large-hearted. Some boys owe much to a good *Schoolmaster*. I speak from experience. My thoughts go back, and I think, that, next to that dear one who crossed to the better land long since, I owe most to my old schoolmaster. Habits were formed then which have not been broken. Impulses were created which have never wholly died away. The CLERGYMAN of the parish is often a dear friend, and a teacher whose words ring through many years. All the children know him, and if he be lowly and loving like the Great Master, they will feel proud and happy when he smiles upon them, or says a passing word. I think of one who always had

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a kind look for me, who encouraged me in a hundred different ways, who fostered principles which I have never forgotten; who wrote letters of affection and solicitude when I went from home, and began the battle of life. He was beloved at Aylesbury, and Barnet, and Mildmay Park. He has gone home now to partake of the 'rest which remaineth for the people of God.' His name was the Rev. William Pennefather; and I cannot write this chapter without recording my love for his character, and my lively recollections of the happy past. The *Sunday School Teacher* must not be forgotten, many a boy owes very, very much to him. His labours often are above praise, and when he dies his works will follow him. I know we have to contend with many difficulties, but Sunday School Teachers specially should pray for grace and strength to be made living epistles of the truth. It isn't what we *say*, but what we *do*. Bear and forbear. When I was a little boy, a teacher struck me on the face, so that my cheek was bruised for a week. I dare say I was in fault, but it would have been better, perhaps, had the teacher taken to his heart that great Italian proverb: "The noblest vengeance is to forgive." Even now, I often see some Sunday school teachers who a few hours after they have dismissed their class are smoking cigars and talking slang. If you want boys to go down the right road, you must not point the way merely, you had better travel the journey with them. But, as I said before, home is the great seminary, and there is no teacher like a DEAR MOTHER. All the brave men who flash into light at God's bidding, whether it be Martin Luther, or John Wesley, owe most to the teachings of a good mother. Oh, how she loves! We may be cruel to her, (God forbid that we ever should); but her love would bear up against hardship and neglect. We might do wrong, but she would forgive. All the world might go against us and every door be barred to our

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approach; but her heart would be ever open, and her arms stretched wide to clasp you to her fond faithful, long-suffering bosom. Sooner or later we all feel this. So do the words our mother spoke in the far off years have power. I read a story the other day. Some of you have heard it before. Let me tell it again. A mother on the Green Hills of Vermont stood at the garden gate, holding by her right hand a son of sixteen years, and with a love of the sea. "Edward," said she, "they tell me that the great temptation of a sailor's life is drink. Promise me before you quit your mother's hand, that you will never touch strong drink." Said he (for the man himself told the story), I gave her the promise. I went the broad globe over—to Calcutta, San Francisco, Cape of Good Hope, and for forty years, whenever I saw a glass of sparkling liquor, my mother's form by the green hill-side of Vermont rose up before me, and to-day, at sixty, my life is innocent of the taste of liquor. Was not that sweet evidence of the power of a single word? And yet, it was but half, said he, for yesterday there came into my counting-room a man of forty, who asked me "Do you know me?" "No," said I. "I was brought once," said he, "drunk into your presence on shipboard. You were a passenger. The captain kicked me aside. You took me into your berth, kept me there till I had slept off the intoxication, and then you asked me if I had got a mother. I said I never had heard a mother's voice. You told me of yours at the garden gate, and to-day, twenty years later, I am master of one of the finest packets in New York, and I came to ask you to come and see me!" How far back that little candle throws its beam—that mother's word on the green hill-side of Vermont! God be thanked for the power of a single word.

The voice says:

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GUIDE US!

Not only love us, and bear with us, and teach us, but guide us. You may tell the toddling infant to walk, but it wants your fingers to guide it from chair to chair. Oh, guide these little ones. The path of life is often rough and rugged, guide them lest they dash their foot against a stone. Temptations will come, evils will lie in wait, the great enemy of souls is ever on the watch, oh, guide these little ones into the "green pastures," and beside the "still waters." Be yourself what you wish them to be. Build up life with prayer, and hope, and love, and purity. Guide them to the fountains of knowledge, and the fresh, living springs of truth. Help them to moral expansion. Lead them to the "fairer manners," and the "sweeter laws." Guide them to sublime heights. Never cramp their thoughts, or fetter the outflowings of their generous sympathies. Answer their childish questions, evolve their difficulties, lessen their troubles. Guide them. Let them lay their heads upon your bosom, and feel that it is the softest, cosiest, dearest pillow in all the world. Guide them with wise utterance and holy counsel. Guide them to their "Creator in the days of their youth." Speak of the "better country," and of Him, who when father and mother forsake will take us up. Oh, yes, if all else be forgotten, guide them to Him, who eighteen hundred years ago was subject to earthly parents—who on Calvary remembered His mother, and gave her to the beloved disciple, and who once spoke the sweet, tender, gracious, kingly words: "*Suffer Little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not.*"

THE END.

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